

## **The Bountiful Banana**

Through the ripening process, bananas go through a ten-color spectrum. Bananas are the only fruit that develops better aroma, texture, sweetness, and color as they ripen after harvest. Ripening happens very quickly. Inside the fruit, there are tiny seeds that release a ripening hormone. This hormone is a mixture of ethylene gas and carbon dioxide, and this causes the fruit to have a small ideal eating window.

Bananas come from a plant called Musa and are native to Southeast Asia. They are grown in warmer areas of the world. There are many types and sizes; the color usually ranges from green to yellow, but some varieties are red.

Buying bananas is fairly simple because it is mainly based on the color of the banana. The best stage to buy bananas is in the middle of their ripening spectrum. During this stage, the banana will be mostly yellow with a small amount of green on the ends. It is also important to consider how soon you will eat or use the bananas when you buy them.

When eating or using immediately, you should pick yellow bananas with brown spots because they are perfectly ripe. If using later, try slightly green bananas because they will continue to ripen while stored.

When picking bananas, you should look for bananas bright in color that are full and plump. Try to avoid bananas with bruises. Moist, dark areas on the skin usually mean the fruit inside is bruised. Watch out for a dull, gray color, as this means they have either chilled or overheated during storage.

A ripe banana will have no green skin. It is not ripe if the stem can not be easily broken while peeling the banana. When peeling the banana, the skin may be difficult to separate from the fruit, which means the banana is most likely starchy and bitter. This may cause digestive distress and/or constipation if this type of banana is eaten raw. When bananas have tiny dark specks (sugar specks), it is perfectly ripe and will have the fullest flavor.

Bananas are a great source of vitamins and nutrients. They contain potassium, fiber, vitamin B6, vitamin C, and antioxidants. One large banana has about 120 calories and 16 grams of sugars. The fiber in a banana helps slow the digestion and absorption of sugar in your bloodstream, which promotes satiety and provides a more stable release of energy compared with concentrated sugar sources, such as juice or other sweetened beverages.

When storing bananas, they should be kept away from direct heat and sunlight at room temperature. They should also be kept by themselves, not touching other fruit. This is because as bananas ripen, they speed up the ripening of other fruits in their vicinity. In the warmer months of the year, bananas will ripen more quickly compared to the winter months.

You can slow down and speed up the ripening process in many ways. To slow the ripening process, refrigerate the bananas for several days. The skins may turn brown, but the fruit inside will be fine. Allow the fruit to come to room temperature for the best flavor before eating.

Speeding up the ripening process can be done by putting the bananas in an open paper bag on the counter. Once ripe, they will keep for a maximum of two days before they become over-ripe.

Once a banana is peeled, it should be eaten immediately. The air exposure will cause discoloration. Whole bananas can be frozen, but when thawed, the bananas will be softer. If you like banana bread, try freezing the bananas in their skin for later use. These bananas can also be used for blended drinks.

When buying a bunch of bananas, one or two inevitably start to turn brown and overripe before they are eaten. There is good news! A banana continues to sweeten, and the flavor intensifies as the banana ripens. This makes them perfect for many baking recipes.

Bananas are a fruit loved by people around the world. Bananas are an all-star choice when it comes to adding more nutritious, wholesome foods to your meals and snacks.

(Sources: [foodnetwork.com](http://foodnetwork.com), [thespruceeats.com](http://thespruceeats.com), [healthline.com](http://healthline.com))